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London, United Kingdom

PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Eelam Tamil refugees in India need to have fundamental rights protected

Eelam Tamils fleeing genocide in their homeland are detained by India in camps that appear to be outside of national or international jurisdictions. The case of 25 Eelam Tamils locked up in the Chengalpet ‘special camp’ and the ongoing hunger strike by 12 of the detainees should be a wake up call for the UN, especially its refugee agency, to pay finer attention to the plight of all Eelam Tamil refugees.

More than 200, 000 Eelam Tamils fleeing genocide in their homeland by the occupying Sri Lankan military have sought sanctuary in India. For decades, these people have been detained in government run camps in coastal towns; they have been accorded minimal rights.

Most disturbing are the existence of ‘special camps’ such as Chengalpet and Poonthamalli, where refugees are detained indefinitely as prisoners without trial. Often these are young men accused of belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but without any evidence to prove such allegations. The ongoing hunger strike by 12 people held at Chengalpet is a poignant reminder of the existence of these ‘zero rights zones’ beyond the reach of national and international laws.

India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor does it have a national refugee protection framework.

Nonetheless, the UN is fully aware of the the number of Eelam Tamil refugees in India and their plight. It has been involved for decades in fixing short-term solutions to facilitate their return. However, in its 2012 report the UNHCR in India reported that return of Eelam Tamil refugees from India is hindered by “continuing military occupation of private land”.

The appropriation of Eelam Tamil land by the Sri Lankan military, incidentally with the assistance of India, have only increased in 2012. The land grab, though appearing at surface to be corporate greed, is strategically designed to both change the demography and challenge the territorial integrity of the Tamil homeland: intentions are clearly genocidal, thus forcing ever more numbers to flee as refugees.

Eelam Tamils and their friends gathered outside the High Commission of India in London on Tuesday, 03 July 2012, urge the UN to ensure that the ‘special camps’ are immediately closed, non governmental organisations are granted access to all refugee camps, fundamental human rights of all refugees are protected and appropriate action is taken to halt the genocide which is the source of the refugee crises.

Signed

Tamil Coordinating Committee United Kingdom